August 6, 2007

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

TO ALL INTERESTED GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND PUBLIC GROUPS:

In accordance with the environmental review guidelines of the Council on Environmental Quality found at 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 1500, and with the use of the implementing environmental review procedures of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) found at 40 CFR Part 6 entitled "Procedures for Implementing the Requirements of the Council on Environmental Quality on the National Environmental Policy Act" as guidance, the EPA has performed an environmental review of the following proposed action:

Wastewater Construction Project
proposed by the Town of Edgewood
located in Santa Fe County, New Mexico

EPA Project Number: XP-96634601-0

Estimated EPA Share: $ 955,600
Estimated Local Share: $ 430,020

The Fiscal Year 2006 Appropriations Act for the EPA included special Congressional funding for water and wastewater construction projects. The Town of Edgewood (Town) was selected to receive funding support through these special appropriations for the construction of new wastewater gravity and force mains, a wastewater lift station, and an effluent distribution system that will transport treated effluent back to the Town for reuse to conserve limited water resources in the area. These construction activities are part of an overall new wastewater collection and treatment project to be built to serve the wastewater needs of the citizens living in the area. The Town currently does not have a centralized wastewater treatment system. Most of the area's single family dwellings and businesses utilize private individual on-site septic tank systems, with the associated leach field systems, for their domestic wastewater disposal.

Recent ground water monitoring studies conducted by the New Mexico Environment Department have detected elevated levels of nitrate in the aquifer in the Edgewood area. This situation is indicative of wastewater loading into the local aquifer caused by a significant number of failing or inoperable septic tank systems. The Town has proposed the construction of a new wastewater collection and treatment system to eliminate this public health hazard. The EPA will fund only the collection and reuse portions of the overall project, and has conducted an environmental assessment and review of only those portions of the project. The wastewater treatment facilities will be constructed with state funds. The proposed effluent distribution system will conserve water by reusing already treated wastewater for local uses.

The environmental review process, which is documented by the enclosed Environmental Assessment, indicates that no potential significant adverse environmental impacts are anticipated from the proposed action. The project individually, cumulatively over time, or in conjunction with other actions is not expected to have a significant adverse effect on the quality of the environment. On that basis, I have determined that the project is not a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment, and that preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not necessary. My preliminary decision is based upon the enclosed Environmental Assessment, a careful review of the Environmental Information Document prepared for the project, the results of the public participation process, and other supporting data which are on file in the office listed below and available for public review upon request. Therefore, I am issuing this preliminary Finding of No Significant Impact pertaining to the project.

Comments regarding my preliminary decision may be submitted for consideration to the attention of the Office of Planning and Coordination (6EN-XP), Environmental Protection Agency, 1445 Ross Avenue, Dallas, Texas 75202-2733. After evaluating any comments received, the EPA will make a final decision. No administrative action will be taken on this preliminary decision for at least 30 calendar days after release of this Finding of No Significant Impact. The preliminary decision and finding will then become final after the 30-day comment period expires if no new significant information is provided to alter this finding.

Responsible Official,

John Blevins
Director
Compliance Assurance and
Enforcement Division

Enclosure

cc: Howard Calkins, Mayor
Town of Edgewood

Ron Curry, Secretary
New Mexico Environment Department

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

WASTEWATER CONSTRUCTION PROJECT
proposed by the TOWN of EDGEWOOD
located in SANTA FE COUNTY, NEW MEXICO

BACKGROUND

The Town of Edgewood (Town) is located in the north central portion of the state approximately 30 miles east of Albuquerque. The Town is situated in the far southwestern part of Santa Fe County, and has proposed the construction of new wastewater gravity and force mains, a wastewater lift station, and an effluent distribution system that will transport treated effluent back to the Town for reuse to conserve limited water resources in the area. These construction activities are part of an overall new wastewater collection and treatment project to be built to serve the wastewater needs of the citizens living in the area. The Town currently does not have a centralized wastewater collection and treatment system. Most of the area's single family dwellings and businesses utilize private individual on-site septic tank systems, with the associated leach field systems, for their domestic wastewater disposal. Recent ground water monitoring studies conducted by the New Mexico Environment Department have detected elevated levels of nitrate in the aquifer in the Edgewood area. This situation is indicative of wastewater loading into the aquifer caused by a significant number of failing or inoperable septic tank systems. Fractured bedrock above the local aquifer is allowing untreated wastewater from the septic tank systems to drain into the Town's water supply.

The Town has proposed the construction of a new wastewater collection and treatment system to eliminate this public health hazard. Recent population growth in the area, a high increase in real estate values, insufficient land available for the installation of a leach field type disposal system by the many businesses and commercial users in the area, and the elevated levels of nitrate in the local aquifer have all required the Town to pursue construction of the new wastewater collection and treatment systems. The EPA will fund only the collection and reuse portions of the overall project, and has conducted an environmental assessment and review of only those portions of the project. The wastewater treatment facilities will be constructed with state funds. The proposed effluent distribution system will conserve water by reusing already treated wastewater for local uses such as landscape irrigation, dust suppression, or other non-potable beneficial activities. The collection and reuse portion of the project will utilize the special Congressional funding in conjunction with local funds. The project is shown on the map enclosed as Figure 1.

The proposed project is considered to be a federal action requiring compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). In accordance with the environmental review requirements of the Council on Environmental Quality found at 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 1500, and with the use of the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) implementing regulations found at 40 CFR Part 6 entitled "Procedures for Implementing the Requirements of the Council on Environmental Quality on the National Environmental Policy

Act" as guidance, the EPA is preparing this Environmental Assessment to assist in determining the environmental impacts of the proposed action, and in evaluating whether an Environmental Impact Statement or a Finding of No Significant Impact will be prepared for the proposed project.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Town has proposed the construction and installation of that portion of the overall project to be funded by the EPA as follows:

1. Collection lines approximately 5.5 miles in length, including gravity and force mains;
2. Lift station to transport wastewater to the treatment facility; and
3. Effluent reuse lines to transport wastewater back to the Town for beneficial uses rather than disposal into the environment.

The improvements will provide a safe and dependable wastewater collection and treatment system to serve the wastewater needs of the Town. As previously stated, an integral part of the overall project will be to reclaim the wastewater generated in the area rather than discharge the effluent into the local environment. The new facility is expected to reduce the impacts to the local aquifer by reducing the amount of water to be withdrawn by an increasing population. The proposed project will not require the purchase of new land or displace any existing citizen, home or business.

ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED PROJECT

The funding recipient evaluated and considered a range of various alternatives to address the infrastructure needs of the area. Important factors influencing the evaluation of the processes and their recommended solutions include environmental acceptability, overall costs, availability of land for the intended uses, maximum reuse of existing facilities when applicable, operation and maintenance costs, system reliability, accommodation of future expansion needs, and public acceptance. A complete description of the alternatives is provided in the Environmental Information Document developed and provided by the funding recipient for the project.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The Town is located in an area characterized by open, gently-sloped rangeland that is predominately a grass-covered plain with interspersed juniper and cholla cactus. Land use in the area is primarily residential with appropriate commercial development and enterprises, but also consists of open land used for livestock grazing. The general vicinity of the Town is situated at relatively high elevations ranging from 6,400 to 6,700 feet above sea level. The area has a continental climate characterized by light and variable precipitation, large diurnal and moderate annual temperature ranges, and low humidity with plenty of annual sunshine. The area receives only 6 to 8 inches of precipitation annually, with most of the rain occurring between the months

of June and October. The sole source of potable water in the area is ground water pumped from the Estancia Basin. Air quality is considered good even though local high winds often cause natural airborne dust storms.

The predominant soil types in the area include Harvey and Witt loam, which consist of level well drained loamy soil. Vegetation in the project area is characterized as species compatible with open rangeland, and includes gramma grass, deep seed grass, yucca, prickly pear, asters, milk thistle, broom snakeweed, one-seeded juniper, cholla and siberian elm.

According to the 2000 Census, the Town had a population of 1,893 residents consisting of 20 percent Hispanic and 80 percent considered White/Not Hispanic. The project will serve all residents equally, and will improve and maintain public health standards for the local citizens.

IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

The proposed project was analyzed to identify potential short-term, long-term, and cumulative impacts on the environment. There are no anticipated significant adverse environmental impacts associated with the proposed action that cannot be reduced to acceptable levels as identified and discussed below.

1. Biological Resources Including Threatened and Endangered Species: Based upon coordination with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, construction of the proposed project should not have significant adverse impacts to biological resources since protected animal and plant species, and their protected habitat, are not known to occur in the project area.

2. Cultural/Historic Resources: Based upon coordination with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and local Indian tribes, construction of the proposed project should not have significant adverse impacts to archaeological, historical, architectural, or cultural resources since these protected resources are not known to occur in the project area. If cultural materials are encountered during construction, work will stop immediately in the general area of the discovery, and the funding recipient will immediately notify the SHPO of the discovery. Any such resources discovered will be evaluated in accordance with the requirements of 36 CFR Part 800, and appropriate mitigation measures developed and implemented, as needed, in consultation with the SHPO before construction in the area is allowed to continue.

3. Floodplain: Based upon coordination with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the local Floodplain Administrator (FA), construction of the proposed project should not have significant adverse impacts to the floodplain since the project will not be located in this protected resource. The local FA has determined that no specific mitigation measures will be necessary; however, the funding recipient is responsible for continued coordination with the FA and must complete any subsequent permitting process prior to the initiation of actual construction activities.

4. Wetlands: Based upon coordination with the United States Army Corps of Engineers (COE), construction of the proposed project should not have significant adverse impacts to wetlands or jurisdictional waters of the United States since construction activities will not require the issuance of a project-specific permit under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. The funding recipient is responsible for continued coordination with the COE and the New Mexico Environment Department, and must complete any subsequent permitting process prior to the initiation of actual construction activities.

In order to further protect the natural beneficial functions of the floodplain and wetlands, and to minimize the potential flood hazards to life and property, the construction funding is conditioned to read:

a. The recipient agrees not to collect or treat wastewater generated by new development in the floodplain or wetlands by the project facilities for a period of 50 years from the date of the environmental assessment related to this project. This restriction does not apply to development in the floodplain or wetlands which existed prior to that date;

b. The recipient agrees to adopt and enforce suitable ordinances and implementing procedures for effective local administration of this floodplain and wetlands service area restriction. On application of the recipient's governing body and after considering all relevant information on a proposed development's effects on the natural functions and values of the affected floodplain and wetlands, the EPA Regional Administrator may waive the service area restriction in individual cases; and

c. EPA and the recipient intend that this floodplain and wetlands service area restriction shall benefit any person, organization, or entity possessing an interest in preservation of the natural environment in the 100-year floodplain and wetlands subject to this restriction. Any such beneficiary may seek enforcement of the restriction against the recipient or its successor in a court of competent jurisdiction, if notice of the intent to seek enforcement is first given to the recipient and the EPA Region 6, and neither entity initiates corrective action within 90 days of receiving such notice.

5. Surface Water Resources: Based upon coordination with the Surface Water Quality Bureau of the New Mexico Environment Department and the National Park Service, construction of the proposed project should not have significant adverse impacts to protected surface water resources since effluent will not be discharged into waters which have been designated as a wild and scenic river. The funding recipient is responsible for continued coordination with the New Mexico Environment Department, and must complete any subsequent permitting process prior to the initiation of actual construction activities.

6. Ground Water Resources: Based upon coordination with the Ground Water Quality Bureau of the New Mexico Environment Department, construction of the proposed project should not have significant adverse impacts to protected ground water resources since the project area is not located over a designated sole source aquifer. The funding recipient is responsible for continued

coordination with the New Mexico Environment Department, and must complete any subsequent permitting process prior to the initiation of actual construction activities.

7. Prime and Unique Farmlands: Based upon coordination with the Natural Resource Conservation Service, construction of the proposed project should not have significant adverse impacts to prime or unique farmlands since these protected resources are not known to occur in the project area.

8. Air Quality: Based upon coordination with the Air Quality Bureau of the New Mexico Environment Department, construction of the proposed project should not have significant adverse impacts to air quality since the project is located in an area which is in compliance with the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for all criteria air pollutants. To further insure compliance with NAAQS standards, all vehicles and motorized equipment used in construction must comply with regulations regarding the control of air pollution from mobile sources. The funding recipient is responsible for continued coordination with the New Mexico Environment Department, and must complete any subsequent permitting process prior to the initiation of actual construction activities.

9. Environmental Justice: The project was reviewed to ensure that construction will be conducted in an appropriate manner so that all persons and populations are served equally by the infrastructure improvements. Based upon the results of an evaluation to rank the potential environmental impacts to local communities using a computer-assisted mathematical formula, including Geographical Information System maps and census demographic data, no persons or populations will be discriminated against or denied the benefits of the proposed project. Since all persons and populations will be served equally by the project, there will be no adverse impacts that are considered disproportionate to any particular portion of the population.

10. Coastal and Barrier Resources: Since the entire state is inland and not adjacent to any coastal location, construction of the proposed project should not have significant adverse impacts to coastal and barrier resources.

11. Cumulative Impacts: Potential cumulative impacts would be those impacts to the local environment that would result from the proposed project in combination with other ongoing actions, and those reasonably foreseeable future actions. No other major construction activity is being conducted presently or planned for the immediate future. The proposed project will not individually nor cumulatively over time have a negative impact on the quality of the human or natural environment. To the contrary, improved infrastructure will have a positive environmental effect by enhancing public health and protecting the natural environment from continued contamination and degradation.

DOCUMENTATION, COORDINATION, AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A public hearing for the proposed project was held on October 11, 2006, at the Edgewood Community Center located at 27 East Frontage Road. The purpose of the meeting was to inform

the public of the proposed project, to identify any concerns, and to request public participation in the development of the project. General questions were raised concerning mosquito control, reuse fire hydrants, effluent storage, construction phasing, and the specific locations of collection lines. All these public comments were adequately addressed during the hearing, and no specific adverse comments or concerns were received.

During the process of conducting the environmental review and preparing this Environmental Assessment for the project, coordination has been conducted with all required resource protection agencies and offices to solicit and incorporate their initial review and comments. Copies of this Environmental Assessment will be provided to those agencies and offices for their final review and comments. Other interested parties may request a copy of the Environmental Assessment in writing from the EPA, Office of Planning and Coordination (6EN-XP), 1445 Ross Avenue, Dallas, Texas 75202-2733.

References

1. Revised Environmental Information Document, Proposed Edgewood Wastewater Project for the Town of Edgewood, New Mexico, December 2006.
2. Amended Final Engineering Report for Wastewater Collection, Treatment, and Disposal System, Town of Edgewood, New Mexico, February 2005.

RECOMMENDATION

Based upon completion of this Environmental Assessment, and a detailed review of the Environmental Information Document for the project, it has been determined that construction activities are considered to be environmentally sound. Therefore, it is recommended that a Finding of No Significant Impact be issued for this project.